

## **Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 30**

### **RESOLUTION CHAPTER 70**

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 30—Relative to African-Americans.

[Filed with Secretary of State September 11, 1996.]

#### **LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST**

ACR 30, W. Murray. African-American community: University of California.

This measure, among other things, would request the University of California to prepare a series of studies on specified aspects of the African-American community.

WHEREAS, California's history and development have been shaped largely by the contributions of its African-American population, the members of which have effected important social and political policy changes in education, arts, language, civil rights, labor, and other facets of California's lifestyle that have resulted in more inclusionary policies towards people of color. These influences have broadened the state's perspective on its diverse population and have impacted the state's laws, institutions, and policies; and

WHEREAS, Even with these contributions, current statistics demonstrate that large segments of the African-American population have not benefited from California's advances—a fact that is reflected in their high levels of poverty, unemployment and academic dropout rates, low levels of political participation and self-esteem, intracommunity violence, including domestic violence, homicides, and riots. Moreover, these indicators signal that this important segment of California's population is turning on itself, as well as non-African-American constituencies, as an expression of their frustration and oppression; and

WHEREAS, The Legislature recognizes that current social, economic, and political problems in African-American communities largely stem from history—that is, a history of slave trade which stripped its victims of culture, language, and self-esteem, a history of laws denying African-Americans equal rights and protection, and a history of institutionalized discrimination which continues to keep African-Americans poor, jobless, powerless, and desperate; and

WHEREAS, This history separates African-Americans from other ethnic populations in this state who have immigrated to this country, and presents unique problems impacting personal and intimate aspects of African-American lives; and

WHEREAS, It is in the best interest of this state that causes which contribute to the problems of the African-American community and which inhibit that community's full participation in the educational, political, scientific, social, and economic activities of this state, be examined and eliminated; and

WHEREAS, The continued exclusion, underutilization, and underdevelopment of resources that exist in African-American communities threaten the stability of the state's economy and its social structure; and

WHEREAS, Studies of African-Americans problems have focused largely on pathological aspects of the community or have unfairly compared African-Americans with European-Americans in spite of the wide cultural, economic, political, and social differences between these populations. Many of these studies victim-blame, concluding that African-Americans cause their own problems even when they have negligible power to change their situations, or the studies employ European-type solutions to African-American problems; and

WHEREAS, The intent of the Legislature is that a subject-friendly approach be used to search policies and institutional practices that contribute to the problems specified in this resolution, and that researchers look at the problem, not the victim, to determine its causes and offer solutions; and

WHEREAS, Fatal diseases such as cancer, AIDS, sarcoidosis, and cardiovascular conditions shorten African-American lives in appalling proportions. Chronic conditions, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and asthma, continue to surface in the African-American community, affecting longevity and productivity. Infant mortality and lack of access to health services and information continue to be pressing problems; and

WHEREAS, African-Americans are subject to multiple stress factors that may impact on their positive mental health. The necessary ingredients required for African-Americans to develop and maintain a healthy sense of themselves in families, interpersonal relationships, and employment, and in being productive, valued members of society, are often jeopardized by personal, social, and institutional forms of oppression such as racism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism; and

WHEREAS, A preponderance of research on the mental health of African-Americans compares them to European-Americans, in order to compare the similarities and differences between the two populations. One of the problems with this type of research is that it assumes that European-American value systems associated with ways of developing, feeling, thinking, and behaving are the ideal for everyone. Hence, African-Americans may be seen as "less than" others when their development and cognitive styles and behavior are different from the so-called normative standards; and



WHEREAS, Statistics indicate that domestic violence between males and females is more prevalent in the African-American community than in white communities; and

WHEREAS, “Societal sexism” generally places the burden of child-rearing on mothers while concurrently devaluing women economically and socially; and

WHEREAS, This devaluation of women undermines their parental authority and negates the moral values these single female parents try to instill in their children. With little support from government or the African-American community, while these African-American women bear the burden of raising the children, they receive criticism for their condition. This burden-criticism dilemma places a high price on the well-being of African-American mothers and children. Many African-American mothers get around these barriers successfully and rear children who are productive members of society. Others are forced to relinquish parental responsibilities to the foster care system, where 40 percent of the children are African-American; and

WHEREAS, The state has recognized the enormous problems affecting African-American communities which inspired the recent creation of the Commission on the Status of Black Males, the California State University-based Center for Applied Cultural Studies, and the Center for African-American Educational Excellence. However, other aspects affecting African-American communities, such as health problems stemming from hazardous and toxic wastes in their communities, domestic violence, mental and physical health, and single parent households, have not had adequately focused research; now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring,* That the Legislature hereby requests the University of California to prepare a series of studies on aspects of the African-American community. It is the intent of the Legislature that this resolution be advisory in nature and that it encourage a series of activities on the part of the University of California designed to address the public policy concerns identified in this measure:

(a) Physical Health. Statistically, African-Americans are in far worse physical health than other segments of the population. Yet, medical research to date has failed to adequately address critical differences in health care approaches between African-American and non-African-American populations.

Therefore, the Legislature hereby requests that the University of California conduct a study to determine what steps should be taken to address African-American health problems and to develop programs that seek to solve disproportionate health problems in the African-American community. Moreover, it is requested that this study include focus on environmental and institutional factors contributing to poor physical health among African-Americans.

(b) Mental Health. Much of past research concerning African-Americans has suffered from categorizing them in a deficit or negative model which forsakes the positive forces that shape their lives and contribute to their good mental health status. There is presently an effort to research psychological issues pertinent to African-Americans that moves away from the deficit model to acknowledging African-Americans as experts on their own reality.

Therefore, the Legislature hereby requests that the University of California consider using this model in conducting a study to examine the factors, including resiliency, that lead to effective coping strategies and positive mental health in African-Americans. This study will be useful to inform not only students and practitioners of the mental health professions who may treat members of the African-American community, but also to inform the community itself so as to promote African-American-centered mental health programs and policies.

(c) Domestic Violence. The Legislature therefore requests that the University of California examine whether societal sexism within economically, politically, and socially depressed African-American communities contributes to the high incidences of domestic violence between males and females in African-American communities.

(d) Education. Proposals for African-American-centered academics have appeared both in California and the nation as a means to improve academic performances among African-American students. The Legislature, therefore, requests that the University of California conduct research to determine whether these new approaches to educating African-Americans may improve academic performance and motivation.

(e) Single Parents and the Changing Family. Sixty-three percent of African-American households are managed by single female parents. These female parents work to overcome societal policies that discriminate against women both within and outside the African-American community.

The Legislature, therefore, requests that the University of California review societal sexism and the barriers it creates for African-American single parents. In addition, the Legislature requests that the University of California compare successful single female-headed households with children against those that are not successful and the elements that create the differences between them; and be it further

*Resolved,* That the Legislature requests that the University of California focus resources to stimulate research and to promote evaluation and analyses of these problems by knowledgeable academicians, members of the professional and business communities, government officials, political and community leaders, and concerned citizens so that they may propose solutions that will benefit all segments of our society; and be it further

*Resolved,* That the Legislature requests that the University of California seek suitable research and graduate training funds commensurate with this research request in an effort to develop comprehensive solutions to these crucial state problems; and be it further

*Resolved,* That these policy research efforts consider the use of existing data, whenever possible, and encourage the creation of new data when needed; and be it further

*Resolved,* That the University of California consider, as an initial priority, the gathering and examining of information and data on existing efforts, including those conceived by African-American scholars, that propose solutions to these problems, and available funding so that a work product can be organized in a manner that will avoid duplication of effort and cross purposes; and be it further

*Resolved,* That, for these purposes, the University of California is asked to make concrete efforts to seek funds from foundations, private sources, and the state and federal government; and be it further

*Resolved,* That the University of California consider establishing an advisory committee as part of the task force to assist in the development of a report, or a series of reports, to be presented to the Legislature setting forth the results of these studies. The advisory committee should include persons knowledgeable about the African-American community or from groups that represent that community, or both; and be it further

*Resolved,* That, through the adoption of this resolution, the Legislature once again expresses its confidence in the ability of the nation's greatest university system to assist the state in addressing these important public policy problems and in meeting the full potential of California as we prepare to enter the 21st century; and be it further

*Resolved,* That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit a copy of this resolution to the Regents of the University of California.